



MADRE

Spring 2021

speaks

Lead Like a Girl



MADRE

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Dear MADRE Friend,

Two years ago, we embarked on a journey and launched our VIVA Girls initiative to support girl leaders around the world in ways never seen before. With your help, we've changed the landscape of what it means to support young women and girls!

When we first envisioned VIVA Girls, we knew we needed to get resources to the hardest-to-reach girls — girls living in war zones, girls in rural areas without access to the internet, and girls without networks of peers and mentors.

We've seen our positive impact: half of our grants went to groups and individuals who had never before received any funding. That means we're reaching girl leaders in communities that big philanthropy too often neglects — like young Afro-descendant women, girls with disabilities, and individuals who identify as LGBTQI+.

In the pages to follow, you will find stories of the successes you made possible — profiles of girls leading the way in their communities. These wins showcase what's achievable when we trust and amplify girls' leadership.

For example, you'll learn of Nitzia, who gained the trust of community leaders to ensure Indigenous girls' voices are heard, and Ana in Peru, a young woman who recently qualified as a candidate to be the first trans woman in Congress. I hope their stories and the others shared here will inspire you.

I never forget that everything MADRE and our partners accomplish is possible thanks to your support. For this reason, my team and I are forever grateful.

In appreciation and solidarity,

Yifat Susskind
Executive Director

© Brian Hatton Photography LLC



2 Years of VIVA Girls!

VIVA Girls Are Running the World

Many young leaders face disadvantages because of their gender and youth — and their perspectives are the first to be dismissed or excluded. For the past two years, we've been changing that. Through MADRE's VIVA Girls initiative, we partner with young women and girls from marginalized communities, including Indigenous Peoples, those living with disabilities, Afro-descendent people, LGBTQI+ people, and refugee and internally displaced people.

We applaud their vision and bravery as they build trust in their communities, support their peers' bold actions, and drive movements for social change. MADRE is proud to highlight the remarkable work and accomplishments made in the past two years — achievements made possible by supporters like you. Learn more about this initiative at MADRE.org/VIVAGIRLS. ♦

Cover: MADRE partner, Santoshi Bankariya, stands in the foreground, center, with other young women who escort children to school in rural Nepal. ©Ruhani Kaur.

Meet the Newest MADRE Partners

Amplifying Indigenous Girls' Rights in Mexico

In the community where Nitzia Ruiz works, San Francisco del Mar Pueblo Viejo in Oaxaca, Mexico, families rely on fishing for their food. But climate breakdown is destroying the fish population.

Nitzia is taking action to secure her community's livelihood, while amplifying Indigenous women's and girls' demands for their rights and for an end to violence.

As in many communities worldwide, COVID-19 lockdowns have made food supplies hard to reach in the San Francisco del Mar community. In collaboration with MADRE and local partner, Niña-Mujer Origen, Nitzia delivered food aid, which protected lives and boosted the community's confidence in girls' leadership. Activities like this and others have shown community leaders what Nitzia and Niña-Mujer Origen are capable of during this crisis, increasing trust in all areas of their work.

"Oaxaca is where I connected with our Indigenous origins and where I met and got involved with the feminist movement," shared Nitzia.

Niña-Mujer Origen and Nitzia also facilitate workshops in local Indigenous communities for parents and other leaders to discuss girls' rights and create action plans to meet community needs. She also helps conduct trainings with girls to advocate for themselves, including access to education and freedom from domestic violence. Using her experience and background in audiovisuals, Nitzia helps the girls create compelling anti-violence presentations, like online creative sticker campaigns, to bring greater awareness to the community. ♦



Nitzia Ruiz, Niña-Mujer Origen, Mexico



Nitzia, far left, with other members of Niña-Mujer Origen in San Francisco del Mar.

Shaping the Next Generation of Leaders in the Philippines

Jade Leung is dedicated to feminist education through creative art and activism workshops for young Indigenous girls. As a Lead Convener with YouWin, a MADRE partner organization, she uplifts the next generation of girl leaders who will advocate for change, champion human rights, and contribute to LGBTQI+ and Indigenous movements in the Philippines.



Jade Leung, YouWin, Philippines.
Photo courtesy of Jade.

These workshops provide a safe space where girls can express themselves freely while amplifying calls for justice. YouWin posts girls' art online to spread awareness about human rights campaigns in the Philippines. Brave activism like this is ever more urgent against the backdrop of President Duterte's regime's continuous persecution and attacks on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

What's more, your gift to MADRE allows Jade and YouWin to continue these life-changing workshops online throughout COVID lockdowns. They also rely on other innovative means, such as pre-recorded sessions, to reach those in their community who don't have reliable access to the internet. Jade says their efforts are making a huge difference:

"We've learned that the online and digital world is not accessible for all. So, we made our office a learning hub for the grassroots women to have space to learn and be guided. There is a great digital divide for the grassroots women that we have to address as a movement." ♦



Members of YouWin pose with their posters calling for an end to violence against women. ©YouWin



Santoshi Bankariya tutoring children in her village. Photo courtesy of Santoshi.

Ensuring Access to Education for Indigenous Children in Nepal

Eighty-one people. That is the total number of Indigenous Bankariya community members left in the entire world. And in this small village in Nepal, Santoshi Bankariya, a young Indigenous leader, is doing her part to ensure they thrive now and into the next generation. With our grassroots partner, the National Indigenous Women's Federation, Santoshi is ensuring children have access to education and their Indigenous language.

As the second person from her community to ever graduate from high school, Santoshi is determined to make sure kids in her community succeed.

"I realized that if I didn't do this work, no one was coming to help us," said Santoshi.

Santoshi devised an initiative with two goals: keep children in school and support those already forced to drop out. She accompanies children who must make an arduous four-hour trek to school each day and works with their parents to explain the importance of education, building families' buy-in to keep children enrolled. Santoshi is also helping to preserve her Indigenous language by teaching classes in her native tongue to children who cannot attend school and directing a cadre of older girls and young women to assist with her work, thanks to MADRE funds.

And when the pandemic shuttered schools, your support helped Santoshi continue to tutor children to make sure they don't fall behind in their education. ♦



Santoshi Bankariya, National Indigenous Women's Federation, Nepal. ©Ruhani Kaur



Happy Geas, Program Manager with Tanzania's Eagle Wings Youth Initiative. Photo courtesy of Happy.

Building Community Ties to Support LGBTQI+ People in Tanzania

As a Program Manager with the Eagle Wings Youth Initiative in Tanzania, a MADRE partner, Happy Geas helps those who've been marginalized or stigmatized because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Through Eagle Wings, Happy provides sessions for parents, government leaders, and health workers to hear from LGBTQI+ people about the impacts of the stigma they face and how to end discrimination.

After an Eagle Wings member convinced her parent to take part in one of these educational dialogues, it made a dramatic difference. Her parent was so moved by what she learned in a session, they committed to make a change. Now, the Eagle Wings member reports that she is no longer questioned or stigmatized about her sexuality by her family.

As Happy shares, "We need to ensure regular engagement with different stakeholders ... from family to political leaders ... through dialogues, meetings, and trainings ... art, sports, and ceremonies."

Your support makes it possible for MADRE to fund a wide range of efforts that protect the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. We're providing economic empowerment and legal aid, increasing access to health services, and connecting LGBTQI+ women to the larger women's movement in Tanzania. ♦



Participants at the January 2020 disability justice workshop Estefanía organized. © Estefanía Cubillos

Fostering the Disability Justice Movement in Panama

Estefanía Cubillos, a blind young woman activist in Panama, is motivated to build power and autonomy among young women with disabilities — despite the continued discrimination and violence they face because of their gender and ability status.

With MADRE's help, Estefanía convened young women and girls with disabilities from across the country for a four-day workshop where participants forged connections and learned skills to advocate for themselves and their communities. The participants learned yoga and took an accessible self-defense class. Through these activities, they reinforced the importance of self-care and self-trust.

At the end of the workshop, each participant developed an action plan detailing steps to improve the lives of other young women with disabilities in their communities. Their plans ranged from developing workshops to promote health and sexual education for people with disabilities to creating online resources for Deaf women on YouTube. As these leaders return to their communities and create their own programs, the tools and knowledge gained will have a lasting impact and deepen organizing led by and created for girls with disabilities.

Currently, Estefanía is working to respond to the needs of young women with disabilities during the COVID-19 health crisis. These women are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due to a lack of access to essential supplies. With emergency funding from MADRE, Estefanía distributes critical items like sanitary napkins, nutritional supplements, medications, disposable diapers, dry food, and cleaning and personal hygiene products. The leaders who attended the disability justice workshop are located all over Panama and are crucial in creating a network to distribute aid. ♦



Estefanía Cubillos, *Equity and Gender of Blind Women*, Panama. Photo courtesy of Estefanía.



Ana Flavia, *Peruvian Trans Movement of Arequipa*, Peru. Photo courtesy of Ana.

Advocating for the Trans Community in Peru

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened risks already faced by the trans community in Peru, such as lack of access to healthcare and security. That's where Ana Flavia Chávez comes in. Ana is President of the *Movimiento Peruano Trans de Arequipa* (Peruvian Trans Movement of Arequipa), a MADRE partner organization that provides information about human rights and what it means to be a trans woman. Ana works to highlight the immense need for trans voices, such as her own, at tables where community decisions are made.

Ana uses her law and journalism background to advance trans women's rights, and recently, garnered enough votes to become an official candidate to represent her constituency for the Congress of Peru. If elected, Ana would be the first trans woman in this role. She is grateful for the faith placed in her leadership, sharing: "Thank you, VIVA Girls, for trusting us."

With funds from MADRE, Ana supports the psychological and legal concerns of young trans women and focuses on organizing trans women in Peru. With your support, her organization can continue its work during the pandemic and rely on digital resources to connect and communicate with a wider audience of trans women. ♦

A Talk with MADRE's Indigenous Partner, Kamala Thapa

In January, MADRE Executive Director Yifat Susskind and our grassroots partner and Indigenous rights advocate from Nepal, Kamala Thapa, spoke at Global Washington's Women of the World's annual celebration. The event focused on how Indigenous women lead in response to the pandemic and climate breakdown. Yifat interviewed Kamala, who shared:

"The COVID pandemic and climate destruction have revealed how much policies fail to protect all people, and especially those most vulnerable due to systemic discrimination and inequality — like Indigenous women and girls. As Indigenous women, we not only see all of the impacts, but as change agents for the society — caregivers, and protectors for our families, communities, and our lands — we must respond."

Kamala has 15 years of experience working to advance the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, advocating for Indigenous land rights, climate justice, and women's rights. She's a world-renowned leader on issues related to Indigenous Peoples and climate change and has also conducted extensive research in these areas. ♦



Kamala Thapa, Indigenous rights advocate. Photo courtesy of Kamala.

You can watch the insightful interview between Yifat and Kamala here: MADRE.org/womenoftheworld



Left, MADRE partner, Yanar Mohammed, head of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, speaks at the Center for Global Women's Leadership at Rutgers University. ©Rutgers University

Right, MADRE Executive Director Yifat Susskind during her TED Talk. ©TED Talks



Host a MADRE Speaker

MADRE staff and our partners are available to speak at colleges, community centers, places of worship, podcasts, and conferences across the country and internationally. Our speakers are also ready to speak in virtual spaces in live or recorded sessions. Many talks feature the leaders of our partner organizations, who are on the frontlines of today's global crises. Hear directly from the women and girls creating positive change in communities worldwide!

If you would like more information, go to MADRE.org/host-a-speaker or contact Cait Mackaman at cmackaman@MADRE.org. ♦

MADRE Movers & Shakers

This new section is dedicated to MADRE staff making magic happen.

Meet Malika Giddens, Communications Associate, the woman behind our social media and digital outreach.

What is your favorite thing about working at MADRE? What drew you to work at MADRE?

When I learned about MADRE, I was coming from one organizing space into another. I knew one of the things I wanted to do was to build stories that amplify the voices of people who not only look like me, but who are dedicated to building a more just world. Because MADRE prioritizes Black and Indigenous women and girls of color, I knew this was going to be a space for me. This organization is filled with people who are dedicated to emphasizing the power of grassroots organizers and their communities. I'm proud to be able to tell the stories of women and girls who are really shining and making a difference.

What is one thing you want people to know about MADRE's work?

Whether it's through the posts you see on social media or the pages you click through on our site, all of it is a show of care for the work women and girls around the world have committed to. As a queer, Afrolatinx woman, it's important to me to uplift LGBTQI+ communities and ensure a safe space for folk to not only be celebrated but supported. The Anna Foundation and the ELITE organization are two partners that I believe deserve their shine for their work with Black LGBTQI+ people in Uganda and Kenya, respectively.

What does the feminist future you envision look like?

My envisioning of a feminist future is one where Black, Indigenous, Women of Color, disabled people, LGBTQI+ people can thrive. It's one where oppressive frameworks are destroyed; trans people can exist without barriers, wealth is redistributed, and we won't need to do this work.

When not fighting for human rights, where can you be found?

When I'm not fighting for human rights, I'm probably playing video games, writing a poem, or waiting for Rihanna's new album. ♦



Above, Malika Giddens, Communications Associate, MADRE. Photos courtesy of Malika.



A New Resource to Protect What You Love



Mother and daughter
join together in healing
in Guatemala. ©MADRE

Protecting the communities you love shouldn't be costly or complicated. So, to thank you for supporting the future of MADRE and our partners, we want to help you plan for yours — for free! We've partnered with FreeWill to provide our community with an online tool to write your legal will, at no personal cost. No matter your age or circumstances, everyone needs a will, and completing this essential act of care for your loved ones takes just 20 minutes online.

Building your vision for the future begins today.
Protect your loved ones, for free, by visiting
MADRE.org/FreeWill.

Your Gift to MADRE...

- **Unleashes a powerful force for good.** Your gift sustains the work of grassroots women, our on-the-ground partners. You fuel worldwide programs that meet urgent needs in communities and create lasting change.
- **Gets emergency aid where no one else can.** When disaster strikes, your support enables us to partner with local women activists who know the lay of the land, where even the largest aid agencies can't reach. You bring crucial resources — like food, water, medical care, and shelter — directly to those most in need.
- **Stops at nothing to dismantle injustice and create social change.** You help us provide human rights training and the space for women to organize. Thanks to you, women build new skills, step up as leaders, and mobilize for rights-based policies.



At right, MADRE partner, Qwenty Lopez,
a young Wayuu woman from Colombia.

Go to MADRE.org/ways-give to learn how you can become a Lifeline member by giving monthly, donate stock through a donor-advised fund, or join our planned giving program.